

Remarks at a Tax Relief Celebration in Dallas Center, Iowa

June 8, 2001

Thank you all very much. It's nice to be back on the farm. [*Laughter*] I want to thank the Barretts for their hospitality. I was here before. I'm going to make mention of that in a minute, but it's great to be back here again. Tom and Judy and their family represent what America is all about—family values, family love, hard work, tradition, history, generations. So it's an honor to be back here and be able to talk a little bit about what's going on in the Nation's Capital.

I am so honored to be traveling today with members of the Iowa congressional delegation, at least those who had the wisdom to support tax relief for the hard-working people of Iowa.

The Senator was really effective. I know you were proud of him before this piece of legislation passed. But if you had seen him like I saw him, working hard on behalf of people, you'd really be proud. This is a monumental legislative achievement, because the chairman from the great State of Iowa worked diligently on behalf of the American people. This happened because Chairman Grassley made it happen, and I am so grateful.

As you know, we Bushes are used to taking orders from people named Barbara. [*Laughter*] That's right, it is her birthday. I want you to note, those in the press corps, I called her first thing this morning and wished her a happy birthday.

But Senator Grassley listens to someone named Barbara, as well, and she is with us today, Barbara Grassley. Thank you for coming, Barbara.

Four Congressmen from Iowa stood fast with the people of Iowa. Congressman Ganske—some say he might be thinking down the road. If he is, I hope everybody gives him a serious look, because he was steadfast when it came to worrying about the working people in the State of Iowa and the farmers in the State of Iowa.

And you've allowed others from the great State of Iowa to come into the greater Des Moines area: Latham, Leach, and Nussle. Fine Congressmen, honest, decent Ameri-

cans. And by the way, Congressman Jim Nussle was the head of the Budget Committee, who did a superb job, an unbelievably good job of shepherding through a budget that not only helps the Nation meet our priorities but a budget that also included some of the surplus going back to the people that pay the bills. Congressman Nussle distinguished himself on behalf of all Americans and, particularly, the people of the State of Iowa. So I am so honored that the three—four Congressmen are with us.

You may have heard that I'm on my way from here to chunk out the first pitch at the College World Series. As you know, it's in Nebraska. I see a man with a Nebraska—there you go, yes—Nebraska hat on. Well, we've got a Congressman from Nebraska, as well, with us, Congressman Lee Terry. I appreciate you coming, Lee, as well; thanks for being here.

I haven't decided whether or not I'm going to go with the fastball or slider today. [*Laughter*] I just hope it's not the same pitch I used in Milwaukee to open the stadium, where there was a nice little bounce to it before it got to the plate. [*Laughter*] At any rate, I'm so honored to be here. Kay, I appreciate you being here. I remember well the speech I gave to the Greater Des Moines Partnership. And I want to thank all the Chamber of Commerce members who are here.

I also want to recognize two former Governors, friends of mine who were steadfast in their support, Bob Ray and Terry Branstad. Thank you both for coming. They still remember you. And I know the Speaker of the House is here, as well. Where's Brent? Brent, thanks for coming. It's great to see you, sir. Thank you.

The last time I was here, we were talking about foreign policy, and there were two people who were here then that aren't here now. And I'm so sad that Herb Plambeck and Bob Lounsberry are not here with us. But I can assure you that they're smiling when they've heard that we had gotten rid of the death tax.

I also want to thank the tax families who are here. For those of you who paid attention to the campaign, one of the things I tried to do in the course of the campaign, in order to build public will for good public policy,

was to talk about how tax relief would benefit real-life families, how tax relief would make a difference in the lives of hard-working Iowa citizens—the Kozol family, the Skiles family, and the Barrett family are here with us.

Thank you all so very much for coming. Thanks for letting me use you as a live example. You should take special pride in knowing that your hard work, along with the hard work of millions of others, convinced the United States Congress to do the right thing. Tax relief is real, and tax relief is on the way.

Somebody said, “Well, why are you going back to the farm to talk about the joint accomplishment that happened in Washington?” Well, it’s the place where I made the promise. It was here that I talked about the agricultural policy that I felt was good for the Nation. It was here where I, amongst other things, said two things loud and clear. One, my administration will support ethanol not only during the campaign but afterwards.

We believe in value-added processing. I haven’t changed my mind since I got elected. I still strongly believe that ethanol is important, not only to reduce dependency upon foreign sources of energy but also as a source and a way to clean the air.

And secondly, I said, if given a chance to be the President, I would do everything I could to get rid of the death tax. The bill I signed yesterday gets rid of the death tax over time. The bill I signed yesterday recognizes that, when you tax a person’s assets twice, it’s unfair. The bill we worked on and I signed recognized the importance of the family farmer in America.

I heard somebody say, “Well, you know, the death tax doesn’t cause people to sell their farms.” I don’t know who they’re talking to in Iowa. I’ve talked to people who were forced to sell their farms in order to pay for the death tax.

But I’ll tell you what else the death tax used to do. It used to cause generation after generation to bear debt, to live under the heavy onus of having to borrow money to pay their taxes. Now, in some cases, they may not have transferred the assets out of the family, but in many cases the death tax caused one generation after another to try to climb out from underneath heavy debt,

and those days are ended, as far as we’re concerned, in America.

And then I went over—that was September 1st, ’99. And to complete the circle, I went—and December 1st—Kay mentioned—and talked about tax relief beyond just the death tax. I laid out some principles. I said, first and foremost, I believe our Government can afford tax relief. Then the economy turned a little south on us, and I began to say, not only can we afford it, we cannot afford not to have it. It’s important for us to have made a case, and I think people listened, that tax relief will provide a second wind to our economy. I said that a principle that needed to be—this needs to be a tax cut that was fair.

We said in the course of the campaign—the Chairman embraced the idea—that if you pay taxes, you get tax relief. That instead of having this business about Washington, DC, targeting people in or targeting people out, we didn’t think that was fair. We said, everybody who pays—the only fair way to deal with tax relief is to reduce all rates on all taxpayers, so that Washington doesn’t pick and choose winners and losers. And that’s what this bill did.

It said, we’re going to be fair about tax relief. And as the Senator mentioned, this is the first reduction in all rates in 20 years—as a matter of fact, since World War II, it has only happened twice: President Kennedy had the honor of signing the tax relief plan; President Ronald Reagan had the honor of signing an overhaul of the Tax Code and overall tax relief plan. And now President George W. Bush has that honor, and I’m in distinguished company, I might add.

We also said in the campaign that it was important to make the code respond to people who make good choices. A good choice is being married. *[Laughter]* And we did something about the marriage penalty in the Tax Code. We say, if you’re struggling hard to get ahead, that we ought to—and you’re raising kids, we recognize that in tax relief. And so part of the tax relief package has raised the child credit from \$500 to \$1,000 per child.

And we also said in this bill, which I supported and I know the Chairman supported,

that there is some who may not have qualified for the tax credit in the past, that we ought to have a refundable tax credit for the poor citizens in our society. And that's a part of the bill, as well.

This tax legislation is good for the country. It's good for the economy. And as importantly, it embodies a principle that is embedded in my political soul. And it says that our Government, at all times, ought to trust the people—that we ought to trust the people of this country. It says, once we meet our priorities, that we ought to trust the people with the surplus. After all, it's the people's money; it's not the Government's money. I would much rather have the tax families making the decisions with their own money than the Federal Government deciding what's best for American families.

No, the core principle of this tax relief plan says, we trust people. We trust the American people. And all of us in public office should, because the American people are the finest people on the face of the Earth.

This tax relief plan is also important because it's the beginning of the change of the tone in Washington, DC. You know, a lot of us that weren't in Washington in the past and used to look up there and weren't really pleased with the bickering that was going on and the name calling and the unnecessary shrillness that were echoing through the Halls of the Capitol. There is still some of that. Sometimes I catch some of those elected officials, maybe not saying things about me that my mother would like to hear. *[Laughter]* But the tone is changing. It is. We're working hard to change it.

The chairman worked hard with his counterpart, with the Democrat in a western State, to get this bill done. Tax relief is important for the economy. Tax relief is really important for the American people. Tax relief is going to be evident pretty quickly, by the way, when married couples start getting a \$600 check this summer. Single head of the household, \$500 check. Single folks, a \$300 check, followed by reduction in rates.

But tax relief also shows what can happen with the right spirit and right attitude in our Nation's Capital. It shows the American people that, if you set aside partisanship and focus on good public policy, we can accom-

plish things on behalf of the American people, instead of kind of worrying about your own standing or focusing on a focus group, taking a poll to figure out what to believe in. If you put the interest of the American people ahead of self-interest or political interest, we can get positive things done in the Nation's Capital. This is the beginning of a lot of reform that's going to take place.

And I'm excited about what's coming down the pike. We're fixing to get a good education bill out—I hope the Senate moves it quickly—one that sets high standards, trusts local people to make the decisions for their children; one that embodies an Iowa concept of accountability, right in the core of the education bill.

I'm excited about the progress we're making as far as our military. I said, loud and clear, when I came to Iowa, it's important for our military to be of high standing, high morale. The first thing we're going to do is pay our troops more money and make sure they're better housed.

I'm going to Europe and looking forward to my trip, going to Europe. But I cannot wait to describe to the people of Europe, the leaders in Europe, how important it is for freedom-loving people to think differently about how to keep peace. Now, Russia is not our enemy. Russia is no longer our enemy, and therefore, we shouldn't be locked into a cold war mentality that says we keep the peace by blowing each other up. In my attitude, that's old; that's tired; that's stale.

Our United States and our allies ought to develop the capacity to address the true threats of the 21st century. The true threats are biological and informational warfare. The true threats are the fact that some rogue nations who can't stand America, our allies, our freedoms, or our successes, would try to point a missile at us. And we must have the capacity to shoot that missile down. It's time to think differently about defense.

We're making progress. We're not only making progress and changing the tone, we're making progress of convincing people that some issues require a different way of thinking.

I'm so excited to be the President. It is an incredible honor, because we also have

a chance to work together to change our Nation's culture, to usher in a period of personal responsibility, to say, loud and clear, to citizens who need help, "Somebody loves you."

You see, Government can spend money, and we will. Our budgets reflect the compassion of America. But compassion isn't measured in dollars and cents. Compassion is measured in acts of kindness, in decency. One of the most important initiatives we're working on is what I call a Faith-Based and Community Initiative. It says, in order to make sure people aren't left behind, not only do children need to be educated, but our Nation must rally mentors to say to children whose parents may be in prison, "I care for you. I want to provide you with hope."

Or that we've got to understand—I'll never forget going to Colfax, Iowa, to understand that sometimes in order to get a person off alcohol or drugs, the most effective way is to change the person's heart.

Government can't cause people to love one another. But what Government and leaders can do is gather up the great compassion of America, encourage faith-based programs to flourish, welcome community-based programs in neighborhoods, all aimed at making sure no citizen in this land is left behind.

And I believe we're on our way. I believe we're on our way to a much better America. We're great. We can be even greater. And it begins by understanding where the strength of this country is. The strength of this country is in the hearts and souls of loving, decent, honorable citizens.

My job is to call upon the best, and it's my honor to do so. It also starts with understanding the awesome responsibilities of the collective offices we hold. I'll never forget that I hold the highest office of the land and, with it, comes an awesome responsibility, and I accept it gladly, and I'm not going to let you down.

Thanks for coming. Thanks for having me back. I'm honored to have your hospitality. God bless you all and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. at the Barrett Farm. In his remarks, he referred to his mother, Barbara Bush; farm co-owners Tom and Judy Barrett; Barbara Grassley, wife of Senator Charles E. Grassley; Kay King, president and

founder, Travel World; and Speaker Brent Siegrist, Iowa General Assembly.

Statement on the Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement

June 8, 2001

Free trade and open markets are at the foundation of my administration's efforts to promote prosperity and opportunity around the world. Our free trade agenda is designed to engage our trading partners at the global, regional, and bilateral level and to expand economic integration and political cooperation. The history of the previous century teaches us that trade is a powerful tool for improving and reforming economies and opening up entire societies.

Today I am sending to the Congress the Vietnam bilateral trade agreement, an important part of my administration's trade agenda. This agreement will increase opportunities for U.S. firms by requiring Vietnam to dismantle a wide range of trade barriers, open its services markets, and provide comprehensive protection of intellectual property rights. Expanding ties between the United States and Vietnam will continue the historic process of normalizing our relations—a process that began during the first Bush administration and advanced in the Clinton administration with the negotiation of this agreement.

This agreement enjoys broad bipartisan support in the Congress, including from many Members who are Vietnam veterans. Enactment of the agreement will provide a solid bipartisan foundation for action on other trade issues.

I recently extended the Jackson-Vanik waiver for Vietnam for one year, based on my belief that Vietnam is making progress on liberalizing its emigration statutes. My administration will continue to press for improvements in Vietnam's overall record on human rights and religious freedom.

At the dawn of a new millennium, the United States stands ready to shoulder its leadership role throughout the world. Engaging other nations in trade is a vital part of U.S. leadership, and it is a key element of promoting economic growth at home and